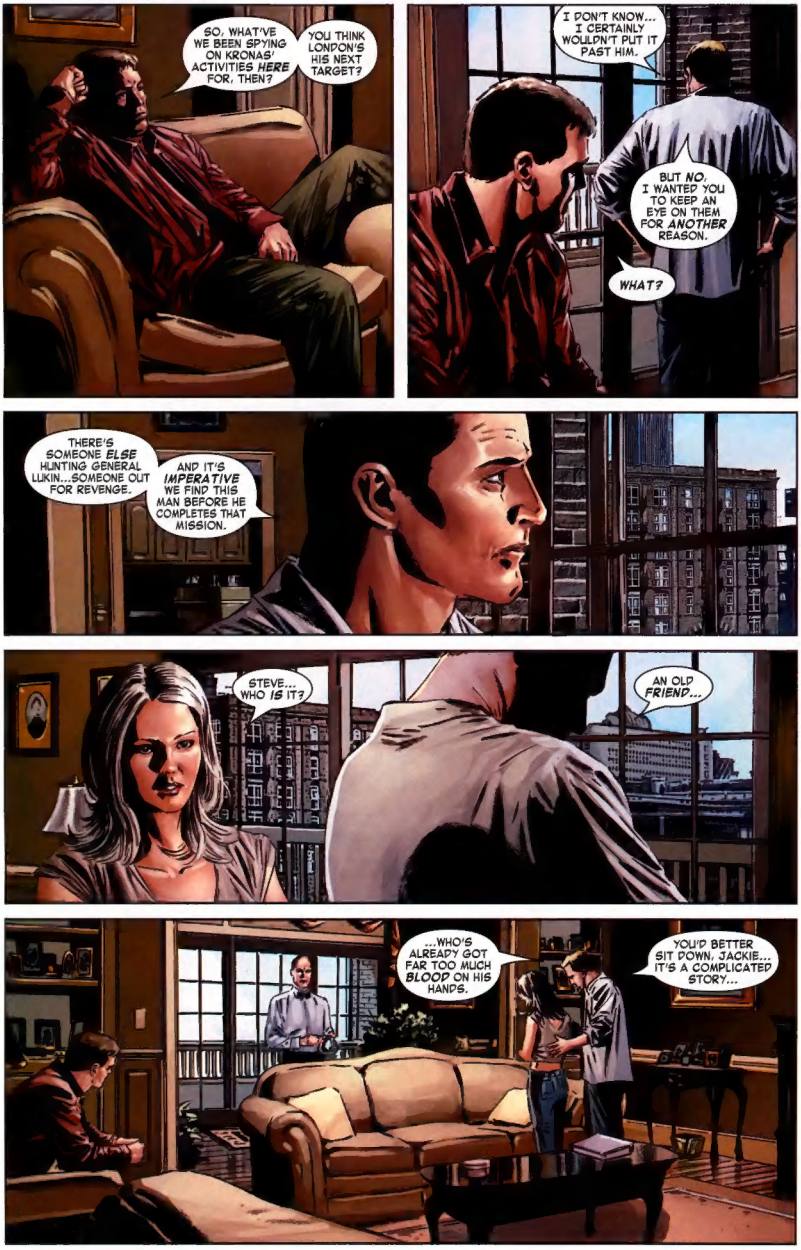
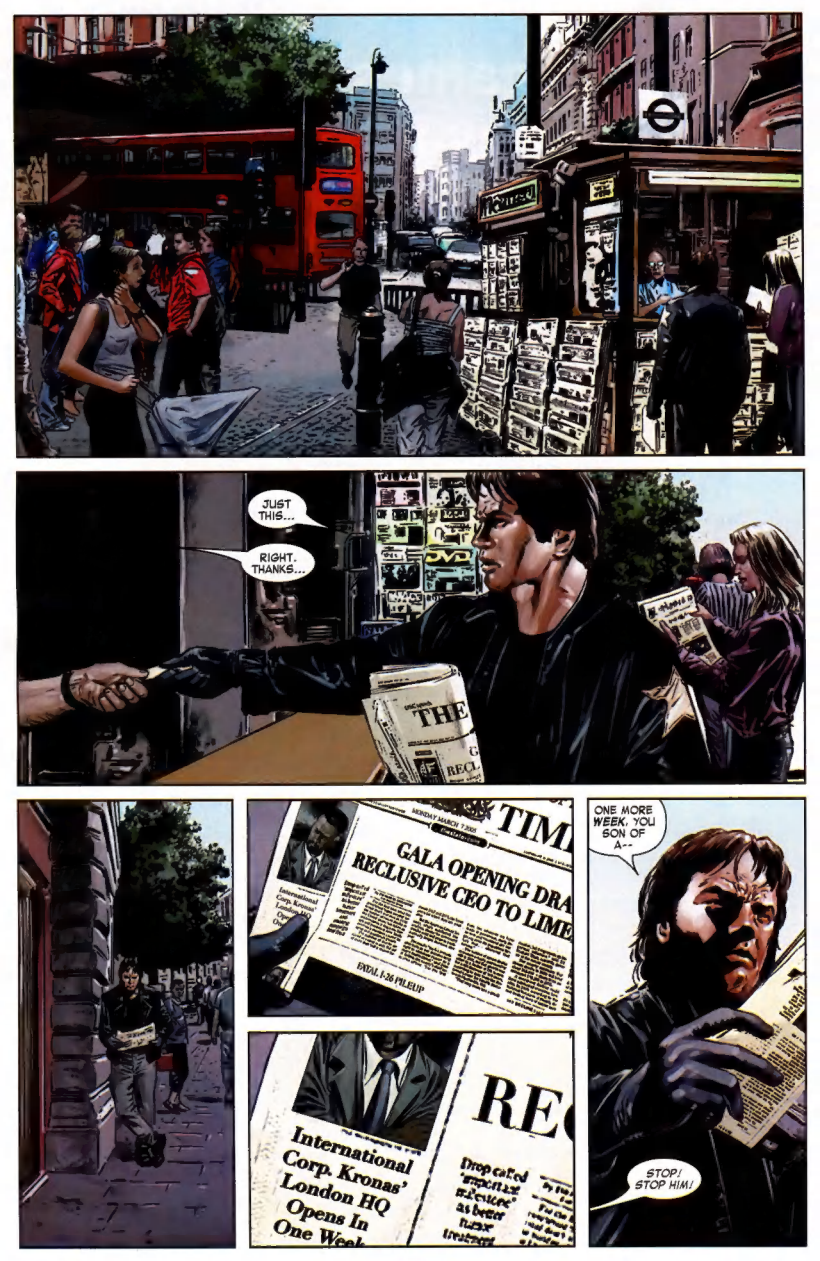
--AND REALLY, WHILE THE MANOR HOUSE WILL ALWAYS BE HOME, LONDON JUST FEELS LIKE THE PLACE TO BE RIGHT NOW...
...SO MUCH MORE VITAL THAN AN OLD COUNTRY ESTATE.
YES, IT SUITS YOU, JACKIE...THE NEW YOUNGER YOU, I MEAN...
AND FROM WHAT JOE TELLS ME, YOU'RE THE TOAST OF THE LONDON NIGHTLIFE.
NOT AS MUCH AS ALL THAT, I JUST LIKE TO GO DANCING AND HE'S TOO COOL FOR IT.
'EY, JUST BECAUSE YOU SLEPT THROUGH PUNK DOESN'T MEAN THE REST'A THE WORLD DID.
SO, IF I GET NAUSEOUS FROM THAT DRUM-AND-BASS CRAP, FORGIVE ME...
YOU WAIT, STEVE. WE GET ANY DOWNTIME, AND SHE'LL BE TRYIN' TO DRAG YOU OUT, AS WELL...
OH, STOP... WE'LL HAVE HIM WISHING HE'D STAYED AT A HOTEL.
NOT AT ALL. IT'S LIKE OLD TIMES...EXCEPT THEN YOU WERE BICKERING WITH YOUR BROTHER, OR ROGER...

WELL, ENOUGH OF OUR NONSENSE. ANYHOW...YOU'VE TOLD US ABOUT THIS GENERAL LUKIN FELLOW AND WHAT HE'S DONE...
BUT I WANT TO KNOW HOW HE'S GETTING AWAY WITH IT ALL...
POLITICS... PLAIN AND SIMPLE.
IF LUKIN WERE JUST A RENEGADE SOVIET GENERAL, IT'S LIKELY HE'D BE COOLING HIS HEELS IN A CELL SOMEWHERE... BUT HE'S SMARTER THAN THAT.
IN FORMING THE KRONAS CORPORATION, AND MAKING IT A VITAL RESOURCE TO THE WORLD... HE'S MADE HIMSELF NEARLY UNTOUCHABLE.
LIKE THE REST OF THE WORLD, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT NEEDS OIL. AND SINCE KRONAS TOOK OVER ROXXON, THEY'RE THE LARGEST SUPPLIER IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.
SO, WHEN HE PLANNED HIS ATTACK, HE MADE SURE THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE POINTED TO SOMEONE ELSE.
AND WITH A MAN THAT POWERFUL, WHOSE COMPANY DONATES MILLIONS TO SO MANY CAMPAIGNS AND CAUSES...
UNLESS THE PROOF IS ABSOLUTE, THEY WON'T TOUCH HIM, WILL THEY?
THAT'S RIGHT. CORPORATE HANDS PULLING GOVERNMENT STRINGS SEEMS TO BE THE RULE OF THE DAY.
LINCOLN PREDICTED IT WOULD COME TO THIS.


SO. WHAT'VE WE BEEN SPYING ON KRONAS' ACTIVITIES *HERE* FOR, THEN?
YOU THINK LONDON'S HIS NEXT TARGET?
I DON'T KNOW... I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T PUT IT PAST HIM.
BUT *NO*, I WANTED YOU TO KEEP AN EYE ON THEM FOR *ANOTHER* REASON.
WHAT?
THERE'S SOMEONE *ELSE* HUNTING GENERAL LUKIN...SOMEONE OUT FOR REVENGE.
AND IT'S *IMPERATIVE* WE FIND THIS MAN BEFORE HE COMPLETES THAT MISSION.
STEVE... WHO *IS* IT?
AN OLD *FRIEND*...
...WHO'S ALREADY GOT FAR TOO MUCH *BLOOD* ON HIS HANDS.
YOU'D BETTER SIT DOWN, JACKIE... IT'S A COMPLICATED STORY...


JUST THIS...
RIGHT. THANKS...
THE
GALA OPENING DRA
RECLUSIVE CEO TO LIME
ENTAL I-35 PILEUP
International Corp. Kronas' London HQ Opens In One Week
ONE MORE WEEK, YOU SON OF A--
STOP! STOP HIM!

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Running later than usual this month, so let's just jump right into the letters. The Question of the Month will return soon, I promise!

Before reading CAPTAIN AMERICA #15 I didn't know anything about Synthia Shmidt (I'm relatively new having only been reading CAP on and off for about ten years). By the end of the issue I felt I knew everything there is to know about her, including the details of her relationship with her father--the Red Skull.

It's a testament to how good a writer Ed Brubaker is that a story that doesn't really feature the title's star was still one of the best comics I read this month. And let's not forget Mike Perkins and Frank D'Armata, who did a great job with the look of the book. I especially enjoyed the first few pages with the old footage of Cap shown from the camera's perspective.

John Turner
UK

Yeah, Mike really killed on those pages. And the rest of the book and the ones that followed. But those opening pages are some of my favorites, too. And I'm glad you liked Sin, because there are big things in store for her.

I can't be complimentary enough of the current volume of CAPTAIN AMERICA. I began buying CAPTAIN AMERICA off the newsstands in 1970 as a young teenager, then off and on (mostly off) from the mid 1970s until the mid 1990s. I always liked what Cap stood for, even during years when being so true to Mom, apple pie, and America seemed almost corny. But the title just lacked that special something that brought me back as a reader on a consistent basis. It could have been the storyline, the artwork, writing, whatever. Today, the work of this creative team that has put together over the first sixteen issues has been nothing short of phenomenal. No disrespect intended, but the last time I looked forward to the next issue of CAPTAIN AMERICA was during Jack Kirby's last go-around. Into the first decade of the new millennium, Ed Brubaker has injected new life into the title, and him bringing back of the real Bucky Barnes (not an android or imposter) was handled beautifully. I was reading every word slowly, taking in each wonderfully drawn panel, anxious in anticipation of turning the next page. I never thought as I neared age 50 that I'd be feeling that way about Captain America. I look forward to each and every issue as much as I do Spider-Man. Thanks.

Larry Peck
(via e-mail)

With the surprising resurrection of Bucky Barnes, I have found it fascinating to see the evolution of his modern day character building on the depiction of him back in the Golden Age stories. I've read a number of those old 1940s books and based on the amount of times Bucky was depicted wielding a machine gun or being captured, beaten and tortured, I think Ed Brubaker has done a terrific job updating him into a superbly skilled, coldly efficient fighter and killer.

I wasn't sure how I would accept his revival, but I think it is an honest, accurate portrayal, even if he was used for years as a brainwashed assassin by the Soviets. Honestly, before this current run by Brubaker, Epting, Perkins and company, I was ready to drop the CAPTAIN AMERICA book, and I've read them off and on since Cap was originally defrosted in the Silver Age. These are some of the best stories I've read in years, and I look forward to seeing how this whole marvelous saga evolves. The combination of tragedy and hope with Bucky and Cap, along with the specter of the Red Skull and Lukin and the fiendish Crossbones and Sin is just brilliant. These compelling characters have been written and illustrated in a modern and mature fashion. Count me enthusiastically in as long as the ride continues!

Don Balch
(via e-mail)

There's nothing like getting letters from long time Cap fans that like what we're doing in this series and who like the Winter Soldier.

Audy Murphy was 16 when he went in the army. Just to give you another way of looking at Bucky. And maybe World War Two.

Jimmy G.
(via e-mail)

Exactly. And as the next letter points out, he wasn't alone.

I haven't written in for awhile...wink. The Winter Soldier is truly a dynamic character, not a hero or villain, neither belonging wholly to the old Russia or the U.S. All thanks to the creative and visionary Brubaker.

Patrice Stafford wrote, "...Bucky was not asked by the brass to be his partner." Ed responds, "...I think having the Army brass in on the decision to give Cap a partner is something that not only makes sense, but works with the history of the character." Well, having served in the Marine Corps from 1990-1994 (active duty), I can say the military assigning Cap a partner not only makes sense, but it's a military prerogative. Also, I lived across the street from a guy that served over 30 years in the Marine Corps; through many conversations, the U.S. government knew many underage teens were enlisting--but they needed bodies for the war.

Sophea Uk
Salem, OR

Yeah, altering that one part of Cap and Bucky's meeting and partnership did not keep me up nights, really. I think it's better if Bucky was assigned the task for a variety of reasons, and trained by the military even before being trained by Cap as his partner.

I just wanted to write in to say that I hate Ed Brubaker. Let me explain. I dropped CAP around issue #26 of the last run. Just wasn't doing it for me. Some convoluted story about Panama or whatever. I was proud. I never drop titles. I was saving myself 3 whole bucks a month! I was already making plans on taking up a healthy cigarette habit with the money I was saving.

Then I kept hearing about this new CAP run. Yes, I know Brubaker is solid. Yes, I know Epting is a classic Avengers artist. But I stayed strong. I would not budge. Then my boy Jarrod (J-Bone Alberich to you) let me read #1-7. I wavered. About 1 month later, I cracked. The story is awesome. The art is solid (can't wait till Epting comes back). Bringing Bucky back was very well done. I'm reading Cap again. I have to read every issue of the new run to know what's going on.

And I have Ed Brubaker (and company) to thank for it. Damn you. I'll never take up smoking now.

Delvin Williams
(via e-mail)

See, Marvel Comics, saving people from cancer one issue of CAP at a time.

Now, here's two letters that arrived at almost the exact same time--point, meet counterpoint.

Yes! Finally! After all that Cap has been through in the last 16 issues, he finally gets some action. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Mr. Brubaker. Steve needed that even more than you know.

Oh great. And now I'm crying! I'm just so happy for the little fella.

Dallan Baumgarten
Tempe, AZ

What is going on in issue #16 between Cap and Sharon Carter? Captain America is still supposed to be in the 1940's mindset. We don't think premarital sex would be the norm for Steve Rogers. He is a gentleman, one of the many traits that make him better than you and I. A better ending to the make out scene would have been AIM busting in and Sharon jumping out of bed alone, with Cap leaping up from her couch with his shield in hand. Let's keep Cap a gentleman of the 40's and not a product of the new millennium.

Brian and Amy Cottrell
Arlington, TX

I laughed out loud when I got to the part about the couch...Well, to each their own, of course, but I'm pretty sure there were plenty of soldiers and civilians in the 40s who had premarital relationships. It's not exactly a 21st century phenomenon. And I can clearly remember my first issue of CAP, bought at the PX in Gitmo when I was four years old, having Steve and Sharon taking a romantic trip to the Bahamas and sharing a bungalow. I'm pretty sure there weren't two beds in that like cabin, like in I Love Lucy. But hey, these people save the world all the time, they're consenting adults, one of whom fought in WW2 for 5 years and saw a ton of hell up-close, they deserve to blow off steam, right?

Anyway, that's all we've got room for this month. Keep 'em coming, and we'll see you next issue, when things really heat up!

Ed Brubaker

AUBREY SITTERSON & MOLLY LAZER
ASST. EDITORS

TOM BREVOORT
EDITOR

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF

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